An Address By

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The Ohio State University

Dr. Fawcett, distinguished guests, fellow graduates:

A funny thing happened to all of us on the way to the stadium this morning!

When I heard that thunder early this morning, I thought the New York drama critics were in town. Frankly, I'm a little disappointed that this is not at the stadium because I never played football on that famous field. I was never a member of the Marching Band. I wasn't a cheer leader. I wasn't even a water boy. And when I received my B.A. -- it was March, not this March -- and our exercises were held over in University Hall -- that great shrine to modern architecture. So this was to be my premiere performance at Ohio State's Stadium, so if you will all come over after we're through here and it stops raining, I just may kick a field goal or something.

Playwrights and football players have a great deal in common. We both love long runs. But I don't want you to worry. My run here is scheduled to close in 18 minutes.

Last night I couldn't sleep and I wandered around campus in a mood of nostalgia. And there was University Hall, for which I have a kind of terrible affection. Annetta Lu Cornell was one of my classmates. (Her father, incidentally, wrote "Carmen Ohio.") Annetta and I used to smoke between classes, and I have a confession to make after all these years. Annetta and I used to drop matches down the stairwell, hoping to burn down the building. We never succeeded. Future generations -- I apologize. I remember also one other thing happened when Annetta and I were smoking between classes. A spinsterish-looking female instructor came up to her when Annetta was puffing away at a cigaret, and with a stony look said to her, "Young lady, I would just as soon be caught in a compromising situation with a strange man as to be caught smoking in public."

And without missing a puff, Annetta looked her right in the teeth and said, "So would I, but we only have ten minutes."

Memories, memories. . . .

Fellow graduates, what a world we live in, what a fabulous age! What a time for beginning! What a decade to be young, to be starting! You are going out into a world where there is

a Christopher Columbus named John Glenn, where Magellan is a guy from Oklahoma named Gordo Cooper, where Vasco da Gama and Amerigo Vespucci are called Titov and Gagarin. And just think, they are our contemporaries.

My young friends, the universe is your onion, and remember, the human mind is capable of traveling farther than any space ship. The human spirit goes beyond missiles and projectiles. Inside each of us is unused rocket fuel. Unassisted we can soar to the stars.

Horace Greeley said "go west." Well, I've been west and it isn't far enough anymore. The farthest reaches of the human mind are still unexplored, waiting to be discovered. Reaching other worlds of the mind takes courage, as much as blasting off at Canaveral. But even a kid with a space toy will tell you nobody ever goes into orbit by standing still.

We write plays. No play is worth anything unless it has structure. What does that mean? That the characters change, grow, develop. If they didn't, you'd be bored; you'd walk out; you'd demand your money back.

I say walk out on the pattern of your own life if you do not change and develop every day of it. Particularly develop your powers of imagination. (Sometimes I wish I could take some of my friends and some of my relatives out of town and rewrite them.)

I want to read you an appropriate short speech from a play my partner, Dr. Robert E. Lee, and I have just completed writing for motion pictures. It's called "The New Yorkers," and it will star Frank Sinatra, Gene Kelly, and probably Audrey Hepburn. Here is the first performance anywhere of one speech from "The New Yorkers" without stars or wide screen, though I hope I'm in living color.

It is 1939 in this scene, and a writer with a frivolous hit on Broadway meets on the street a very wise man who had once been his producer of a more significant play. Remember, it is 1939, before America's entry into the War. And the producer says to the writer:

> "Well, you've got a hit. I've got nothing against hits. I love 'em. I like comic strips, too. But I don't mind at all if a newspaper prints something besides 'Gasoline Alley.'
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> "I'm a funny fellow, Johnny. I think what happens in a theater ought to mean something, too. You're a craftsman in the theater, Johnny -- what the newspaper boys call a working stiff. I don't know any higher compliment. But you can't stop with Act I.

"Let me explain what I mean.

"I've got a piece of a play on my desk, only the first act, by F. Scott Fitzgerald. He's been promising me the rest of it for months. I talked to him long distance this morning in Hollywood at a place called the Garden of Allah, for God's sake. And he was a little drunk, but he made a kind of (Socrates) sense. Not just about himself, but about this whole sleeping continent. Scott said, 'Maybe Act I is as far as we ever go, Louie. There are no second acts in American lives.'

"Now, Johnny, I think Fitzgerald's wrong. I think America is giving up the worship of adolescence. Act II is the best part. It can be, it should be. That's when you take responsibility and start looking at who we really are. In Act I, everybody's still got their baby fat -- mostly between the ears. Act II is when you get slimmed down and go to work.

"Besides, that's the only way you get to Act III." End of scene.

Fellow graduates, welcome to Act II.

Some people think you must stick to the same point of view all of your life. I say it is as necessary to change your mind as it is to change your underwear. I sat in Derby Hall (that was before Denney Hall was built) and read the two most valuable lines I know: "A foolish consistency is the hobgoblin of little minds" -- Emerson -- and Walt Whitman -- "Do I contradict myself? Very well, I contradict myself. I am large; I contain multitudes."

Do you know the brief colloquy between Drummond and Brady in our play, "Inherit the Wind"? Drummond, leaning against the lamp post in the twilight, sees this man Brady, once a giant (of a man,) three-times candidate for the presidency, coming toward him, and Brady says to Drummond: "We were good friends once. I was always glad of your support. What happened between us? There used to be a mutuality of understanding and admiration. Why is it, my old friend, that you have moved so far away from me?"

And Drummond stares at this man, and then says: "All motion is relative. Perhaps it is you who have moved away by standing still."

My friends, you don't need Faith 7 to get you moving, to put you into intellectual orbit. Do it every day. How? Talk back to your TV sets. Challenge your newspapers and magazines and your congressmen. Use your franchise as a human being, as an individual human mind.

Don't let them turn us into a nation of transparent stomachs and little hammers hitting into our subliminals. And when they start to think for you, speak up. Say, "Please, Mr. Opinion Maker, I'd rather do it myself."

Know the value of anger, constructive anger. Be vocal, write letters. (I write letters all the time, but approving letters as well as disapproving letters.)

Perhaps the only sin is silence. The major crime against the democratic process is the inability to be heard, the lack of opportunity to listen.

I have faith in the American public, particularly in the American student. Open every door to him and he will choose wisely and well. Close doors to him and you are in danger of becoming the very thing you are fighting.

Let me use the yardstick of a theater again. Why is Laurence Olivier a great actor? Why do we all consider him a fine actor? Because he is suspicious. Remember that word -- suspicious. Of what? The commonplace, the habit in himself. He will never repeat anything he has done previously.

We all have the tendency to say, "This has worked, I will repeat it"; to say, "I know how to do that; I will let it harden into a mold, a habit; I will play it safe." My dear young friends, nothing has ever been accomplished in this world by playing it safe. Safety is for crossing streets and driving a car and climbing into a bathtub. The imagination is never set loose by the careful man or by the cliche expert. Be intellectually daring, be suspicious of habit, particularly habits of thought.

I know playwrights who have written the same play fifteen times. All have different titles, the characters have different names, but it's the same play. I promise you that our next play may not be successful, but it will be different, because I hope I can continue to be suspicious, analytical of our failures, and doubly suspicious of our successes.

I would like to read you one more speech from "Inherit the Wind," a short one. Drummond, speaking to his client just before the jury comes in, tells him about Golden Dancer. It's one of my favorite speeches.

"Golden Dancer," he says, "that was the name of my first long-shot: She was in the big side window of the general store in Wakeman, Ohio. I used to stand out in the street and say to myself, 'If I had Golden Dancer, I'd have everything in the world that I wanted.' I was seven years old and a very fine judge of rocking horses. Golden Dancer had a bright red mane, blue eyes, and she was gold all over with purple spots. When the sun hit her stirrups, she was a dazzling sight to see. But, she was a week's wages for my father, so Golden Dancer and I always had a plate glass window between us. Let's see, it wasn't Christmas, it must have been my birthday. I woke up in the morning and there was Golden Dancer at the foot of my bed. Ma had skimped on groceries, Pa had worked nights for a month. I jumped in the saddle and started to rock. And it broke, it split in two. The wood was rotten. The whole thing was put together with spit and sealing wax. All shine and no substance." And turning to his client, he said, "Bert, whenever you see something bright, shining, perfect-seeming, all gold with purple spots, look behind the paint; and if it's a lie, show it up for what it really is!"

You, too, look behind the paint. Look behind the sure thing.

When my partner and I direct, we always tell the actors one thing. Care -- one word -- care. Now you are all about to enact your roles as mature citizens, responsible human beings, not leaving the university, but taking the university to the world. And I give you this one direction: Care! Give a damn!

Remember the John Donne ethic -- you are involved in mankind. Disinvolve yourself and you are dead. You are cut off from the greatest bloodstream of all -- humanity. I challenge you all to stay in intellectual orbit, to be a life-long student, each of you, counting every day wasted if you do not explore something new.

Live the life of the mind for the rest of your life, if you do not want to be a vegetable. And do not ever diminish or underrate the power of one vote, one angry or approving voice, one conviction, one passion, one man standing up to be counted.

Do you all know the story about the fantastic new mechanical brain computing machine, with the size of an office building? The scientists felt they had to put a very profound question into it for the first time. They put their heads together and they came up with this question: "Is there a God?" And they fed it into the machine, and all the bulbs and tubes flashed on and off and the tapes spun around and out came this answer: "There is ... <u>now</u>."

My young friends, let us not believe in the divinity of IBM. The giant computers may be able to deal with numbers so astronomical as to be staggering, but I tell you there is no number larger than one -- one human being, you today, each of you, going out as an individual, thinking citizen of the universe.

The men who taught me here at Ohio State walk beside me, sit beside me all the days of my life. I learned a love of Shakespeare from Professors Walley and Wilson. My typewriter is disciplined because Professors Pollard and Getzloe helped me to write a clean and clear sentence and gave me a journalist's fierce respect for the unvarnished fact. I wish all of you had known Herman Miller, Robert Newdick, and Harlan Hatcher, who is now president of Michigan. All of them kicked me in the literary pants and helped to strip me of artsy-crafty affectation. The men in the history department -- one of our fellow graduates today, is Dr. Wittke -- taught me that there is no better way to interpret today than to study yesterday. In the words of Santayana, "Those who do not remember the past are condemned to relive it." Professor Titchener doesn't know it, but that fine classical scholar goes with me on every trip to Greece. Rabbi Harry Kaplan, never by sermonizing, but by the glowing example of himself, showed me that you are an incomplete person if you neglect your spiritual side. Beanie Drake, whose door was always open at the Ohio Union, taught me there is no replacement for a great human being.

Accept no substitutes. And, oh fellow graduates, accept no substitutes in yourself. Cultivate individuality. Cultivate the courageous mind.

Why do we admire Benjamin Franklin? Why are we writing right now a play about him to be called "Ben" and to be presented first, we hope, here at Ohio State. Because everybody said to him, "You're internationally famous, Ben, the Leonardo of the new world. Don't waste your time with these revolutionaries, these crackpots. Even his own son said to him, "Don't stick your neck out Papa. Play it safe."

But Franklin knew, didn't he, as we know, that if you don't stick your neck out, you're a turtle and not a man with a God-given mind?

Do not be a carbon copy of anybody, particularly not yourself of last week, or last year, or even ten minutes ago. Don't call breathing living. Don't call sitting back living. Be part of the tide of life. Be part of the motivating force of it.

President Fawcett, look at those 2,494 intelligent faces. Under those mortar boards, in those heads, I think our group has forty per cent fewer cavities.

I've written something especially for today -- it's very short -- for your graduation and for mine. I'd like to close by reading it to you. It's called -- with apologies to the medical students --

A HIPPOCRATIC OATH FOR A DOCTOR OF HUMANE LETTERS

I am not today the same man I was yesterday, and I shall strive to be a changing, different, and still-growing man tomorrow. For yesterday's answers may not be true today and perhaps even the questions will be different tomorrow.

I shall be angry, passionate, enthusiastic -- like a child with wonder, and I shall not be afraid of being foolish.

I shall be a disturber of the peace and a disturber of the war. With a fusing of words and a detonation of laughter, I shall set off dynamite charges under complacency, conformity, censorship, carbon-copy living.

I am and shall try to continue to be a belligerent optimist, to wake up each day and say: "Good morning, God!" instead of "Good God! Morning!"

This is the age of the dialogue, but I shall listen as intensely as I speak.

I do not believe the chronological age of a man has anything to do with the youngness in his heart, the newness of his conceptions. I shall never retire from the arena of thought, believing absolutely in the immortality of ideas.

I believe in the dignity of the individual, in every man's right to speak, to teach, to write, to doubt, to challenge, to dissent.

I shall stick pins in the fat balloons of pomposity and pretension, particularly in myself.

And from the original Oath of Hippocrates, I affirm that I will look upon him who taught me, even as one of my own parents.

All these things I swear, by those other honorary Doctors of Humane Letters: Socrates, the questioner; Voltaire, defender of the anomaly; Franklin, citizen of the universe.

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